

THINK B4U WINK

AT UNDERAGE DRINKING



Capt. Rodger Williams

A program developed by the Hall County Sheriff's Office to combat underage drinking.

In the early spring of 2003, Captain Rodger Williams and I shared conversation about underage drinking. Captain Williams has always been very passionate about working High School Proms and Graduations, targeting the issue. I shared with Rodger an idea I had about targeting the parents of underage drinkers and calling the program "think before you wink". I shared with him all my ideas for the program and asked that he call Highway Safety to see if they would be interested in helping with funding.

What happened as result of that conversation, I would have never envisioned. Rodger took a good idea and made it into a great one. He carried the idea to a large portion of Central Nebraska and recruited and signed several other law enforcement organizations to participate in this program. The original agencies include Sheriffs Offices from Hall, Adams, Buffalo, Dawson, Hamilton, Howard, Kearney, Merrick and Phelps Counties. Also participating are Police Departments from Aurora, Central City, Cozad, Gothenburg, Grand Island, Hastings, Holdrege, Kearney, Lexington, Minden and St Paul. Troop area C with the Nebraska State Patrol is also participating.

In 2004 Rodger continued his tireless efforts, attempting to sign other agencies to the program. To date he has more than 34 counties and 65 agencies involved in the program which seems to be growing faster than we imagined. At this rate the program could very easily become a statewide effort.

The mission of the group is:

- *To educate adults to the consequences of allowing underage drinking.*
- *To reduce the number of underage drinkers in Central Nebraska.*
- *To reduce the number of alcohol-related vehicle accidents attributed to underage drinking.*
- *To alter community perception in regard to underage drinking.*

To meet these goals, area law enforcement personnel present the facts of underage drinking to community and parental groups in their area. The measure of success will be the reduction of alcohol-related vehicle accidents and the reduction of "minor-in-possession" arrests.

Brochures and stickers, billboards and public service announcements as well as a high impact video have all been produced to bring focus to this issue. Congressman Tom Osborne has become a strong supporter and spokesman for the program. Rodger is to be commended for his efforts. Who know how many kids are alive and better off today because of his tenacity.

